



The Amateur in You, Part 2

What have you been pondering?



Getting into HF

As you might recall from when you took the Technician exam, amateur radio operators have privileges in three major super-bands: **HF** (roughly 3 MHz to 30 MHz), **VHF** (roughly 30 MHz to 300 MHz), and **UHF** (roughly 300 MHz to 3000 MHz, or 3 GHz). There are others, but these are the three on which we tend to focus our attention.

Well, you've heard people talking about HF, and what it's capable of, and now you feel like you're ready to jump into it. So, where do you start?

General class license

You can only do so much with a Technician class license, such as SSB on a 200 kHz section of 10 Meters, plus CW on a couple of other bands. But you have no desire to learn Morse code, so start with [HamStudy](#), master the General material, then take the exam.

Transceiver

The first piece of equipment to acquire might be an HF transceiver, but there are a few things to keep in mind when selecting one. Here are some recommendations when looking for one:

1. It should output at least **100 watts** on SSB
2. Acquiring a used one will save you big bucks, but if you don't know your seller personally, purchase your first rig **new**
3. Being able to transmit on 6 meters, 2 meters, and / or 70 cm is nice, but **not really necessary**
4. A built-in **autotuner**, waterfall, or sound card is a plus, but not a deal-breaker, and many newer rigs have these features
5. A desk mic is not necessary; a **hand mic** will do just fine

6. Purchase from the *Big Three*: **Yaesu**, **Icom**, or **Kenwood**; Alinco is great too, but there won't be many nearby who can support you; for that matter, just stick with [Yaesu](#) or [Icom](#) for your first new rig

Antenna

Your first HF antenna should be a **dipole** ([regular](#), [fan](#), or [OCF](#)) for contacting all over the US, or a **vertical** ([Hustler](#), [hy-gain](#), [Cushcraft](#)) for contacting overseas, or **end-fed** ([MFJ](#), [MyAntennas](#), [Ultimax](#)) for a mixture. Steer clear of doublets (G5RV, ZS6BKW, Zepp), loops, and L-types, not because they don't work, but because they require a little experience and expertise to get working well.

Power supply

Purchase one of these three 30 amp PSUs:

1. [MFJ MFJ-4320MVP](#)
2. [Powerwerx SS-30DV](#)
3. [RandL RLPS30M](#)

Transmission line

Use [RG-8X](#) for your coax, which is inexpensive and low-enough loss for HF work. Be sure to create an RF choke out of 12 feet of it, right near your antenna feed point, to reduce RF being sent back into your shack.

CQ

Now, fire up your new toy, and [get on the air](#). Start with SSB, then work your way into other modes, such as FT8 or PSK31 later, if you'd like. Sit with a mentor and listen for tips. Join a [net](#). Call out **CQ** and see who's out there. Get hooked on [contests](#).

And you thought 2 meters was fun. It was.